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America's military is locked in combat against a dangerous enemy in Afghanistan, facing the constant threat of ambush and roadside bombs. The last thing our soldiers and Marines need is any unnecessary or harmful distractions.

Whether intended or not, the debate on "don't ask, don't tell," and the untimely rush by the White House and congressional Democrats to repeal current law, risks putting our military in a dangerous position. Forcing our war fighters to accept a new standard now would have a disruptive impact on operability and cohesion at a time when the focus is achieving victory and returning home safely.

American soldiers and Marines often rely on each other as much as they rely on material resources, in many cases sharing a core set of values and risking their lives to protect one another.

This reliance takes shape and is strengthened through the most basic element of any combat unit — the four-man fire team. Disrupting this relationship and the cohesion created through experiences forged during ground combat would undoubtedly undermine mission effectiveness among individuals and combat teams.

This viewpoint is shared by the Marine Corps commandant, who stands opposed to repealing current law. Further, each of the service chiefs, in letters to the ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, has expressed concerns about taking any action until the year-long study underway at the Pentagon is completed.

Evidently, the White House and congressional Democrats think differently — and without regard for the consequences of the liberal social agenda on our military.

The majority in Congress is making an unfortunate choice during wartime that will not enhance

our readiness. While critics of "don't ask, don't tell" argue that the policy has forced servicemembers to leave the military, cases of separation due to sexual orientation in the past decade are actually less than one half of 1% of total discharges in that period.

Our time would be better spent on evaluating the real threats facing our military in Afghanistan, starting with the roadside bomb threat, and ensuring our troops have the resources they need. The debate on "don't ask, don't tell" is just another distraction from these and other priorities.